



Engaging Homeowner Associations to Reduce Nutrient Runoff in Stormwater Ponds

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Community stormwater ponds are important for water quality because of their ecological function of filtering stormwater runoff before it enters natural bodies of water. Stormwater ponds also serve an aesthetic purpose and increase property value. Homeowners in communities desire a clean look to their stormwater ponds, which demands pond managers to utilize short-term solutions, such as copper sulfate, which could create long-term problems for water quality and pond health. Some communities' demand for higher maintenance landscapes to maintain a certain aesthetic adds to the pollution runoff taken into the stormwater ponds. When ponds take in a high level of runoff, water quality issues arise and often result in algal blooms and/or fish kills. This project discusses using community-based social marketing to determine the barriers and motivators of behavioral change as it relates to adoption of Florida-Friendly™ landscaping practices to improve community stormwater ponds.

Program Objectives

Through a community-based social market approach, we emphasized that by helping to keep ponds in good condition with preventive measures, such as Florida-Friendly™ landscaping practices, homeowners are helping the environment and their own property investment. The techniques of social marketing include: identifying specific target audiences for behavioral change; keying secondary audiences that influence behavior; deciding on behaviors to be promoted; reducing the barriers to change; determining the best ways to make change easy and enjoyable; and testing effective methods of promotion.

One goal of this project is to encourage homeowners to become more engaged in the health of their ponds by creating a community advisory board. The advisory board is involved with helping to develop strategies to increase homeowner engagement with pond health; by helping design strategies to work with homeowners' associations for neighborhood ponds; and helping determine what type of shoreline plantings and buffer zones homeowners would be most receptive to having in their neighborhoods.

Impacts and Discussion

An educational outreach program with four points is being developed based on the information we have obtained from the focus groups, advisory board and pre-survey results. The program's design will, first, let homeowners know what the ponds do and how they can be maintained. Second, make sure homeowners are talking to their landscapers about the fertilizer ordinance and how it affects pond health. Third, make sure homeowners know about the fertilizer ordinance and follow it. Finally, help homeowners become more comfortable with buffer zones and shoreline plantings to help improve pond health.

The community based social marketing approach takes time to build. A relationship must be maintained to be able to gather information and to compile and analyze the information gathered. The benefit, however, is the ability to offer a program that specifically addresses the behaviors utilizing identified motivators of the community to promote adoption of recommended changes. Gathering this information also allows the identification of barriers to the recommended changes and these can be addressed as the program is presented.

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